



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES & PUBLIC PROTECTION  
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

March 6, 2012

Rep. Stephen Dargan, Co-Chairman  
Sen. Joan Hartley, Co-Chairman  
Public Safety and Security Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

**HB 5378 AN ACT CONCERNING THE MAXIMUM SURCHARGE FOR ENHANCED  
9-1-1 SERVICE**

***The Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection  
supports this bill.***

In the opinion of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, this is the most important piece of legislation before the General Assembly this year. It has often been said that the most important function of government is protecting the public safety.

What is more important than making sure that someone who is scared, alone and in danger can dial three (3) digits that children learn at the earliest possible age and be confident that help will arrive.

Unfortunately, we have reached a point where that most basic and crucial public safety tool is threatened. The state's existing 911 system is antiquated. They are not making parts for it anymore. When parts break down it is necessary to cannibalize parts to repair. There is not enough money in the 911 fund to purchase a next generation 911 system.

The statutory formula for funding the 911 system is a surcharge on phone lines. There is a statutory cap that does not allow PURA (formerly DPUC) to set the rate above fifty (50) cents per phone line. The cost to the holder of a single telephone line is presently six dollars (\$6) per year.

It is important to note that the General Assembly does not set the rate. The annual rate, set by PURA has been at the maximum of fifty (50) cents for the past two years. In its last decision, PURA recognized that the existing rate does not allow the Office of Statewide Emergency Telecommunications (OSET) to meet its statutory obligations.

The DPUC (now PURA), which sets the rate annually for the E911 Surcharge, reported in its 2011 decision that "In the opinion of the Department, the primary reason Public Safety has been unable to meet its E911 budget requirements is caused by the surcharge cap rate of \$.50 per access line required by Conn. Gen. Stat. 28-24-10(c). Based on the FY 11/12 E911 budget, the Department estimates that the E911 surcharge should range between \$0.76 and \$1.00 in order to generate a sufficient level of revenues to fully cover that budget."

Connecticut has one of the lowest surcharge rates in the country at \$.50 (7<sup>th</sup> lowest of the 50 states) with some jurisdictions ranging as high as \$5.00 per line. There have been repeated attempts to have the surcharge cap increased. As far back as 2007, OSET and the E911 Commission recognized the need to raise the cap in order to fund the Public Safety Data Network and other programs.

OSET is a creature of statute. Over the years, the General Assembly has directed OSET to use the E911 fund to provide subsidies and funding for numerous purposes.

Consider the following statutory obligations of the fund:

**Programs/Initiatives that E911 Surcharge supports:**

- Subsidies to (7) Regional Emergency Centers serving (74) towns; \$3.86M/yr; **Statutory**
- Subsidies to (22) cities with populations greater than 40,000; \$5.85M/yr; **Statutory**
- Subsidies to (9) multi-town PSAPs; \$807k/yr; **Statutory**
- Funding for new regional centers; **Statutory**
- Transition grants to promote PSAP consolidation and capital expense grants; **Statutory**
- Subsidies to 169 towns for Coordinated Medical Emergency Direction (CMED); \$1.06M/yr; **Statutory**
- Funding for State Police Troop PSAPs; \$659k/yr; **Statutory**
- Subsidy for Dept. Public Health – Emergency Medical Services; \$250k/yr; **Statutory**
- E911 Service: Network, hardware, training; \$3.62M/yr; **Statutory**

- Statewide Emergency Notification System (CT ALERT); \$825k/yr; **Gov. Rell directive**
- P25 Radio Interoperability System maintenance; \$516k/yr; **E911 Commission decision**
- Replacement 9-1-1 system; RFP quotes \$15-\$53M 5 year costs depending on configuration; **Statutory**
- Public Safety Data Network deployment and maintenance; **Statutory**:
  - \$8.8M installation cost for original 107 PSAP fiber optic network
  - \$2.4M maintenance costs incurred to date
  - \$24M Federal BTOP Grant match over three years (required to receive \$94M federal funds to increase the network from 107 to 667 locations)
  - \$4M annual network maintenance costs into the future

If the General Assembly is to require all these expenditures, it is essential that the cap that has been in place since the creation of the fund be increased. In doing so, this does not guarantee that fees will continue to rise. The history of the 911 surcharge reflects a history of fees going up and down.

These are the impacts of not passing this bill:

- Existing E911 system is obsolete; cannot obtain parts, software is unsupported. Real potential for failures in the system causing direct impact on public safety
- Reduction/elimination of subsidies to cities and towns to run dispatch centers
- Reduction/elimination of subsidies to cities and towns to encourage consolidation
- Reduction/elimination of subsidy to Conn. State Police dispatch functions
- Potential elimination of CT Alert/Emergency Notification System (100,000 subscribers, 3.2 million messages sent in 2011)
- Potential inability to fund ongoing maintenance of Public Safety Data Network

In summary, over the years, the E911 surcharge has been asked to support more and more programs that it simply cannot do at the current rate of \$.50. The cap must be raised in order to continue to support existing programs but most critically, replace an aging E911 system that has a potential for major failure, directly impacting the ability of our residents and businesses to call 911.

Sincerely,



Reuben F. Bradford  
COMMISSIONER